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THE NEW LETTER FROM PASION

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## THE NEW LETTER FROM PASION

Thanks to the efforts of David Jordan we now have what might be an autograph of Athens' most famous banker, Pasion.<sup>1</sup> We may venture that no other scholar in recent decades has done more for the particularly fascinating discipline that concerns itself with documents written on metal tablets, those precious artefacts that too often slip through the cracks between papyrology and epigraphy. It is therefore with thanks and in the spirit of the *amicitia papyrologorum et stelocoparum* that I would suggest a few minor adjustments to this important and welcome text.

The text and translation of the *editio princeps* are as follows:

[Π]ασίων <Δ>ικαιάρχο ἐπιστέλλ-  
ω Σατυρίωνα τιμωρήσ-  
ασθαι καὶ μετελθὲν κα-  
4 ἰ Νικόστρατον τὸν Δεῖν-  
ων[ο]ς ἀδελφὸν καὶ Ἀρε-  
θ[ό]σιον, ὥς παρ' ἐμὲ ἀδι-  
κῶσι καὶ ἐπιβόλεύουσι,  
8 καὶ Γλαυκέτην καὶ Αἰα-  
ντόδωρον καὶ ἐπιβολ-  
εύουσι καὶ μὴ πρότερον  
[πρ]οστελεσθῆναι τῇ-  
12 [v - - - - ca. 17 - - - - ]

I, Pasion, (son) of <->ikaiarchos, am sending a letter for Satyrion to punish and to prosecute both Nikostratos, Deinon's brother, and Arethousios because they are wronging me and plotting (against me) and [sc. to punish and prosecute; see p. 28] Glauketes and Aiantodoros and they are plotting and (or also?) for the X not to be paid before ...

The reader is confronted with two obstacles to clarity, the restoration in line one and the profound contortion of the prose. To the first I can propose a couple of options, but no certain solution. The Greek, however, can be given somewhat better sense and shape.

These two difficulties encompass others. First, we do not expect the ex-slave Pasion to have called himself by a patronym,<sup>2</sup> especially in a letter whose recipient was sufficiently close to Pasion and the events that he apparently did not need – or at least was not offered – much explanation of the action that he was asked to undertake: sender and recipient knew each other. Next, the construction ἐπιστέλλειν τινα ποιεῖν τι, “to send written instruction that someone do something”, is extraordinary and awkward. “[O]n attendrait plutôt le datif.”<sup>3</sup> The second half of the letter presents challenges as well. The postpone-

<sup>1</sup> D. Jordan, A Letter from the Banker Pasion, in D. Jordan and J. Traill (eds.), *Lettered Attica: A Day of Attic Epigraphy* (Athens 2003) 23–39; the article includes (30–35) a highly useful appendix of personal letters on lead tablets. On Pasion see J. Trevett, *Apollodoros the Son of Pasion* (Oxford 1992) 1–45, and E. E. Cohen, *Athenian Economy and Society: A Banking Perspective* (Princeton 1992) throughout. Text reproduced at SEG LIII.1 256.

<sup>2</sup> As Gauthier, *Bull. épigr.* (2004) 140, observes, adding rightly that his father's name, which is not known to us, would likely have been the same as that of one of his sons, i.e. either Apollodoros or Pasikles.

<sup>3</sup> Gauthier, *Bull. épigr.* (2004) 140. Jordan (27) notes support for the construction in Xen. Cyr. V 5.5.1, cited by LSJ (under sense, ἐ. τινα ποιεῖν τι), which could be a typographical error; Marchant prints: ἐπέστειλεν αὐτῷ ἡκεῖν ἐπὶ τὸ στρατόπεδον (i.e. not accusative but dative). But LSJ also cite Soph. OT 106 with the same sense. But here too something seems to have gone wrong, for this is not Sophocles' construction at all; rather, the subject of the dependent infinitive is elliptical (OT 105–106): ἐπιστέλλει σαφῶς / τοὺς ἀντέντας χειρὶ τιμωρεῖν τινὰς (Apollo clearly commands punishing murderers by force, any and all); τινὰς belongs with τοὺς ἀντέντας, and not as the subject of τιμωρεῖν. While the similarity of the document's ἐπιστέλλω τιμωρήσασθαι and Sophocles' ἐπιστέλλει τιμωρεῖν is striking, it may well be nothing more than coincidence. For

ment of Γλαυκέτην καὶ Αἰαντόδωρον (8–9) as direct objects of τιμωρήσασθαι καὶ μετελθέν (2–3) until after the parenthetical clause beginning with ὥς (6–7) goes beyond hyperbaton. The shift to the finite verb ἐπιβολλεύοσι (9–10), of which Glauketes and Aiantodoros are the presumed subjects (p. 28), is unacceptable, especially where sense calls not for conjunction but for cause, not “and they are plotting”, but “because they are plotting”. Private letters often present awkward Greek, but a more grammatical construction of this letter would be welcome.<sup>4</sup>

Some of these problems can be addressed. In the first line, something has gone wrong in the string [Π]ΑΣΙΩΝΙΚΑΙΑΡΧΟ. Countless letters on papyrus and the others on lead, which Jordan has usefully assembled (pp.30–35), lead us to expect sender, recipient, and the verb of greeting/writing/commanding to occupy initial positions in the text:<sup>5</sup> it would be extraordinary, even in an early letter such as this, if the two names before ἐπιστέλλω were anything but sender and recipient. But who wrote to whom? If Pasion wrote, then we might understand, [Π]ασίων <Δ>ικαίάρχ<ω> *vel sim.*,<sup>6</sup> perhaps positing ο for ω and omission of a terminal iota, the last perhaps by a sort of stroke-level haplography before the block-shaped epsilon in ἐπιστέλλω.

But was Pasion the sender? Πασίωνι is good Greek. The photo reveals that spacing on either side of the iota between ΩΝ and ΚΑΙ is quite tight. The photograph accompanying the publication is good enough to show that elsewhere in the tablet iota, whether medial or terminal, is not nearly so cramped: e.g. ἡ Νικόστρατον (4); Σατυρίωνα (2); αἰσθαῖ καὶ μετελθέν (3). The only places where it is spaced closely are those in which the adjacent strokes of contiguous letters are not vertical: e.g. τιμωρήσ (2); καὶ Αἰα (8). But even there, the spacing is not so tight as at line 1. The hand is perhaps not beautiful, but neither was the scribe blind to the aesthetics of spacing. It is worth considering that the scribe forgot to include the iota after the characters ΠΑΣΙΩΝ and inserted it after he had already begun to write the rest of the line. But if the correct, or at least intended, text was Πασίων Δικαίάρχο (i.e. -ωι, dative), then why would the scribe have inserted the omitted iota without also inserting the omitted delta before it? In other words, why correct καίάρχο to ικαίάρχο, not to Δικαίάρχο? Both delta and iota could have fit in the space above the line, between and partly above Ν and Κ. Perhaps there is no Dikaiarchos; perhaps ΚΑΙΑΡΧΟ wrote and sent the letter to Pasion. Kliarchos for Klearchos is attested in Boeotia,<sup>7</sup> and while abbreviated -ο(ς) in personal names in the nominative is not common, neither is it unattested.<sup>8</sup> The epistolary convention

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the very common expression with the dative in early metal tablets: *Syll.*<sup>3</sup> 1259.1–3: Μνησίεργος ἰπέστελε τοῖς οἴκοι ἡ χαίρειν καὶ ὑγιαίνειν; also *SEG* L 276.1: Λῆσις {ις} ἐπιστέλλει Ξενοκλεῖ καὶ τῇ μητρὶ μηδαμῶς περιτδέν ἡ αὐτόν (both re-edited by Jordan, pp. 32–33 nos. VI and IX; on the latter see now E. M. Harris, Notes on a Lead Letter from the Athenian Agora, *HSCP* 102 [2004] 157–170). The expression is also not uncommon in Ptolemaic papyri: e.g. *P.Cair.Zen.* II 59272. 3–5 (251 BC), III 59315.6–7 (250), 59342.1–3 (246), *PSI* V 510.7–8 (254/3), *P.Zen.Pestm.* 49.r.5–17 (244), *Chrest.Wilck.* 451.1–3 (223), *P.Petr.* III 32.G.b.9–10 (217/16) with *BL* VII 161.

<sup>4</sup> I am agnostic as to whether this Pasion must be the man of Athenian trapezitic fame; Gauthier, *Bull. épigr.* (2004) 140, finds the identification ingenious but dubious. If it is the same, we might recall that his slave and successor, Phormion, was known as a poor (non-native, we would add) speaker and prone to verbal blunder, but we might have thought Pasion, whose Greek origins we have no reason to doubt (nor proof of them either), capable of better. *Dem.* 36.1: Τὴν μὲν ἀπειρίαν τοῦ λέγειν, καὶ ὥς ἀδυνάτως ἔχει Φορμίων, αὐτοὶ πάντες ὁρᾶτ', ὃ ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι; [*Dem.*] 45.30: ὑμεῖς δ' ἴσως αὐτὸν ὑπειλήφατε, ὅτι σολοικίζει τῇ φωνῇ, βάρβαρον καὶ εὐκαταφρόνητον εἶναι.

<sup>5</sup> In the papyri the convention is so common as not to need adducing, but it seems to be the norm also, and already, in the early lead tablets. *Syll.*<sup>3</sup> 1260.1–2 (= Jordan 31, no. II): Ἀρτικῶν : τοῖς ἐν οἴκῳ ἡ χαίρειν; *SEG* XLIII 488.1–2 (= Jordan 32 no. IV): [. . . <sup>ca.4</sup> . . .]τος Τεγέαι χαίρειν; *Syll.*<sup>3</sup> 1259.1–3 (= Jordan 32, no. VI): Μνησίεργος ἰπέστελε τοῖς οἴκοι ἡ χαίρειν καὶ ὑγιαίνειν; *SEG* L 276.1, quoted above, n. 4. So also, the first four of Demosthenes' letters, which may well be authentic, begin, “Δημοσθένης τῇ βουλῇ καὶ τῷ δήμῳ χαίρειν” (so does this sixth, which may not be his; the fifth, which may also not be Demosthenes', fits the pattern: Δημοσθένης Ἡρακλεοδώρῳ εὖ πράττειν); authenticity: J. A. Goldstein, *The Letters of Demosthenes (with a Translation)* (New York 1968).

<sup>6</sup> I find no instance of -ο for -ωι, but in this time period ο for ω and οι for ωι are not unknown: Threatte I 224–225, 336; ω for ωι may be due to “careless omission”, but is attested nonetheless: Threatte 358.

<sup>7</sup> *IG* VII 1155 (also 1154: Kliarcha); see also 1237 (Niarchis), 2814 and 2819 (Etiarchos).

<sup>8</sup> E.g. *Agora* XXI B.9.1; *IG* II<sup>2</sup> 37.23 col. ii; 1798.2; 9649.2.

of address, “To X, Y χάριεν”, is relatively rare but well enough known.<sup>9</sup> It does tend, however, to call attention to the superior status of the recipient, relative to that of the sender, and so cuts against the grain of the command, ἐπιστέλλω. The reading “Κ<λ>ίαρχο(ς)” is unsatisfactory to be sure, but, until someone solves the puzzle of sender and recipient, it might point us toward a solution; for now, it is preferable to a genitive patronym, <Δ>ικαίάρχo, and perhaps not much worse than a dative <Δ>ικαίάρχ<ωι>. In any case, whether something like [Π]ασίων <Δ>ικαίάρχ<ωι> (nom. dat.), or something like the rather more dubious [Π]ασίωνι Κ<λ>ίαρχο(ς) (dat. nom.) points us closer to the truth, we may be confident that [Π]ΑΣΙΩΝΙΚΑΙΑΡΧΟ contains the names of the sender and recipient of the letter, a nominative and a dative, but not necessarily in that order. However we understand this first line, we must admit that it is in some way corrupt, that we cannot escape some measure of correction.<sup>10</sup>

Better syntax, however, can be restored to the balance of the letter, which would otherwise have to be called awkward (p. 27), if we interpret the first line as containing the names of sender and recipient, rather than sender with patronym alone. Given this most ordinary of epistolary conventions, we find that the Greek becomes simple and straightforward. Pasion wrote to someone (or less likely, someone to Pasion) with instructions to “punish and pursue Satyrion, and Nikostratos ... and Arethousios”. In other words, Satyrion is the direct object, not the subject, of τιμωρήσασθαι καὶ μετελθέν. This makes good grammar and good sense. Moreover, the rhetorical ordering of the subsequent clause follows the same pattern. Glauketes and Aiantodoros are not the direct objects of τιμωρήσασθαι καὶ μετελθέν but rather of the nearer finite verbs ἀδικῶσι καὶ ἐπιβoλεύoσι. In other words, we have two analogous, almost parallel, expressions.<sup>11</sup> On this interpretation the letter and its Greek were less awkward and better balanced.

I propose then to read, repunctuate, and translate as follows:

[Π]ασίων <Δ>ικαίάρχ<ωι> [*vel sim.*] (or, less likely, [Π]ασίωνι ΚΑΙΑΡΧΟ) ἐπιστέλλω Σατυρίωνα τιμωρήσασθαι καὶ μετελθέν καὶ Νικόστρατον τὸν Δείνων[ο]ς ἀδελφὸν καὶ Ἀρεθ[ό]σιον, ὥς παρ’ ἐμὲ ἀδικῶσι καὶ ἐπιβoλεύoσι | καὶ Γλαυκέτην καὶ Αἰαντόδωρον, καὶ ἐπιβoλεύoσι καὶ μὴ πρότερον | [πρ]οστελεσθῆναι τῇ|ν - - -

I, Pasion, write with instructions to Dikaiarchos to punish and pursue Satyrion and Nikostratos, the brother of Deinon, and Arethousios, since they are wronging and plotting against me<sup>12</sup> and (against) Glauketes and Aiantodoros, and are plotting also that the ... not be paid in addition before ...

On this reconstruction the Greek is more balanced and so was the playing field: Pasion and Satyrion did not join forces against four others; rather, it was Pasion, Dikaiarchos, Glauketes, and Aiantodoros against Satyrion, Nikostratos, and Arethousios.

Finally, let us turn away from the letter’s form and grammar to its purpose and tone. What sort of action did the author have in mind to initiate? The phrase τιμωρήσασθαι καὶ μετελθέν is striking, and not just because it seems to put the cart before the horse (punish and prosecute, rather than prosecute, win, and punish). It does have the air of formula, but perhaps one from outside the courtroom, beyond “the technical sense of ‘prosecute’” (p. 28). When Alexander resolved to raze Thebes in punishment for its rebellion something like this phrase came to mind (so Diodoros 17.9.6, anyway: ὅθεν Ἀλέξανδρος περιαλγῆς

<sup>9</sup> E.g. PSI IV 326.1 (257/6 BC); P.Petr. III 42.C.12.fr.1.1 (III BC); P.Col. IV 87, in erasure before line 1 (244 BC); also “To X χάριεν, Y” at e.g. P.Cair.Zen. III 59341a.7 (247 BC).

<sup>10</sup> I see no way to make sense by rendering the string, [Π]ασίωνι καὶ ΑΡΧΟ, such that the last four letters somehow disguise a second recipient in the dative. Such would only remove the name of the sender, the subject of ἐπιστέλλω, altogether.

<sup>11</sup> (i) principal object (one a simple direct object, the other a prepositional phrase governed by the verbs), (ii) pair of verbs, (iii) secondary objects: <sup>(i)</sup>Σατυρίωνα <sup>(ii)</sup>τιμωρήσασθαι καὶ μετελθέν <sup>(iii)</sup>καὶ Νικόστρατον ... καὶ Ἀρεθ[ό]σιον, and <sup>(i)</sup>παρ’ ἐμὲ <sup>(ii)</sup>ἀδικῶσι καὶ ἐπιβoλεύoσι | <sup>(iii)</sup>καὶ Γλαυκέτην καὶ Αἰαντόδωρον.

<sup>12</sup> The force of παρ’ ἐμὲ is obscure. I do not find it elsewhere in this neutral sense with ἀδικεῖν or similar verbs; perhaps it means to emphasize wrongdoing ‘in my midst’, ‘close to home’, *vel sim.* In that case ἀδικῶσι should govern the letter’s author and ἐπιβoλεύoσι the subsequent objects: “since they are doing wrong against me and plotting also against Glauketes and Aiantodoros”.

γενόμενος εἰς ὑπερβάλλουσιν ὀργὴν προήλθεν καὶ πάσῃ τιμωρίᾳ τοὺς Θηβαίους μετελθεῖν ἔκρινεν). Lysurgus uses a similar phrase to describe the execution of two Athenians, and the injunction against their burial in Attic soil, because they had spoken in defense of Phrynichos, the member of the 400 whose dead body stood trial for treason (Lyc. *Leoc.* 111–116, esp. 116: ταῖς ἐσχάταις τιμωρίαις μετῆλθον). This phrase was, according to Aeschines, used in a question put to the Pythia concerning how best to deal with her neighbors to the south, the Kirraioi and Kragilidai: τίνι χρὴ τιμωρίᾳ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους τούτους μετελθεῖν (*Ctes.* 107). The answer given by the priestess was total destruction: to make war on them night and day, to pillage their territory and polis, to enslave the population, and to dedicate the devastated waste to Apollo Pythios, Artemis, Leto and Athena Pronaia.<sup>13</sup> We call this the first Sacred War; Aeschines called it τιμωρίᾳ μετελθεῖν.

In none of these cases is the virtually formulaic collocation used to describe legal proceedings. The author of the letter may have been asking his colleague, with an emphatic and threatening turn of phrase, to apply the sort of extra-judicial pressure that relies more on *ergon* than *logos*. If this Pasion is the man whom we know so well, it could be observed that the world of maritime finance, in which he was a noteworthy operator, could on occasion turn rough (e.g. Dem. 33.13), especially against slaves. In his attempts to recoup funds with which Pasion is alleged to have absconded, the Bosporean son of Sopaïos evidently spent a considerable amount of time hunting for one of Pasion's bank clerks so that he – since he was alleged to have been a slave – could be forceably detained and submitted to judicial torture (Isok. 17.12–13).<sup>14</sup> Hounding down a slave was one thing, but upon accusing the young metic of kidnapping the bank clerk, Pasion executed summary arrest on the son of Sopaïos, brought him before the Polemarch and extracted from him a stunning six talents in bond (17.12). Had the foreigner been unable to produce the funds he would have been remanded to prison till trial.<sup>15</sup> The tone of this tantalizing letter may well have been a sort of hyperbole shared between colleagues, an insider's exaggeration in which one asks the other to “really put the thumb-screws to Satyrion”. Nevertheless, we should not be terribly surprised to find threatening language in a context dominated by hidden assets, slave bankers, metic clients, and high stakes. We should consider the possibility that Pasion (or whoever wrote this letter) was not calling on a colleague to invoke legal procedure on his behalf, but rather to apply muscle, or at least its threat.

These are but minor suggestions to an excellent edition of this important and fascinating text. If these interpretations are accepted then we might have lost an autograph by Pasion, but we might also have removed from him the threat of a legal battle and in any case given him a larger group of supporters, a better command of Greek, and a bigger stick with which to defend his interests.

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<sup>13</sup> Aesch. *Ctes.* 108: Καὶ αὐτοῖς ἀναιρεῖ ἡ Πυθία πολεμεῖν Κιρραίοις καὶ Κραγαλίδαις πάντ' ἥματα καὶ πάσας νύκτας, καὶ τὴν χώραν αὐτῶν καὶ τὴν πόλιν ἐκπορθήσαντας καὶ αὐτοὺς ἀνδραποδισμένους ἀναθεῖναι τῷ Ἀπόλλωνι τῷ Πυθίῳ καὶ τῇ Ἀρτέμιδι καὶ Λητοῖ καὶ Ἀθηνᾷ Προνοίᾳ ἐπὶ πάσῃ ἀεργίᾳ, καὶ ταύτην τὴν χώραν μὴτ' αὐτοὺς ἐργάζεσθαι μὴτ' ἄλλον ἑᾶν.

<sup>14</sup> Not that such would necessarily, or even probably, have been the outcome, had he been captured and found to be a slave: M. Gagarin, *The Torture of Slaves in Athenian Law*, *CP* 91 (1996) 1–18.

<sup>15</sup> See Dem. 32.29 with P. Gauthier, *Symbola: Les étrangers et la justice dans les cités grecques* (Nancy 1972) 138, and V. Hunter, Introduction: Status Distinctions in Athenian Law, in V. Hunter and J. Edmondson, *Law and Social Status in Classical Athens* (Oxford 2000) 1–29, at 21.